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VENING STAR

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## U.S. Held Assured of Piercing Red ABM Defense

The United States is now convinced its missiles can penetrate a Russian defense involving a large nuclear explosion in space, according to the Defense Department's top scientist.

The claim by Dr. John S. Foster Jr., director of defense research and engineering, came yesterday in answer to a question at the opening session of hearings on anti-ballistic missile problems by a Joint Atomic Energy subcommittee.

Rep. Craig Hosmer, R-Calif., read Foster a statement he had made in 1963 during hearings on the nuclear test-ban treaty.

Foster had said one of the most serious problems posed by the proposed treaty, which has since been signed, was that it would be difficult to tell, without atmospheric tests, whether U.S. missiles were properly designed to penetrate an enemy defense system.

Of particular concern was the fact that the Soviet Union had just completed a series of atmospheric tests involving huge nuclear explosions.

It was felt then—and is still felt by many critics of the status of the U.S. nuclear arsenal—that the Russians might have found some way to melt the casings on nuclear warheads, melt the internal wiring or otherwise make the bombs inoperable.

Foster provided no details yesterday in answering Hosmer's question, but he did say:

"In executive session, I believe I can convince you that this is no longer a problem."

The solution to the problem presumably has been found in underground tests. But some scientists doubt that such tests, necessarily limited in size, accurately reflect the results of the radiation created by a massive explosion in the atmosphere or in space.

As Foster and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul H. Nitze explained to the committee, the Sentinel ABM system, which the U.S. has decided to build as protection against a Chinese nuclear attack, depends on something close to pinpoint accuracy, with one defensive missile assigned to hit each in-coming warhead.

The U.S. strategy for overcoming an ABM system — of the type Russia is apparently de-

ploying — is to overcome the defenses with so many warheads that a devastating number of them would get through.

If Russia could find a way to create an "umbrella" of radiation by setting off one or more huge nuclear devices in space, it would defeat the U.S. strategy of overwhelming the defense.

It is this problem which has now been solved, according to Foster.

Yesterday's hearing — the first of two days of public sessions before the committee begins a long series of closed meetings — was dominated by questions about the Fractional Orbital Ballistic Systems, or FOBS, which Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara said Friday is apparently under development by the Soviet Union.

The FOBS would go into at least a partial orbit at an alti-

tude of only 100 miles and then be fired down toward its target by a rocket engine. Its major advantage, McNamara said, would be to reduce the warning time in an attack to 3 minutes.

But, he said, the U.S. has already begun to deploy an over-the-horizon radar system that would push the warning back up to 15 minutes — time enough to get the planes off the ground before they're hit by the bombs.

Sen. Harry M. Jackson, D-Wash., subcommittee chairman, was especially critical of McNamara for saying, in answer to a question at his press conference on Friday, that the FOBS development did not violate the treaty banning nuclear weapons in space, because, to be used effectively, it would not complete a full orbit.

"At a minimum," Jackson said, "there is a 'good faith'

violation of the treaty. If the Soviet Union tests and stockpiles this kind of weapon, the treaty won't be worth the paper it's written on.

"Why, Mr. Nitze, does the U.S. give away a major bargaining point?"

"... The point I'm trying to make is, with all the talk of an arms limitation agreement, we're off to a bad start with the Soviet Union having a weapon capable of being placed in orbit. It's a terror weapon, and that's the whole point of the treaty."

Nitze replied: "It is no more a terror weapon than an intercontinental ballistic missile—less so."

"The treaty permits development of an orbital system but not the deployment," Foster said. "It (the FOBS) has less military capability than a standard ICBM."

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